

First Person

By Ann Baldi

Public Health Investigator

A Love of Photography Takes Flight



Western Kingbird



Near Chandler Arizona



Casa Grande National Ruins Arizona.

famous for its huge variety of birds and they both became birders. Although I always enjoyed “bird watching,” I did not become a “birder” until then.

There's a difference between a “bird watcher” and a “birder.” “Bird watching” connotes that one is waiting for birds to come to you, while “birding” connotes that one goes out and seeks the birds where ever they may be. One is passive and the other is very active. Birders are limited only by time and money. Many birders' vacations revolve around what bird they need to add to their life-list. If you need a yellow billed magpie you will have to go to central California, since this is the only place on earth to spot one. If you want to see the Ivory Billed Woodpecker – once thought to be extinct – you have to go to a swampy area of Arkansas and hope for a miracle. If you want to see birds of paradise, Papua New Guinea is where you want to go.

Birding is what started my interest in nature photography. I enjoyed photographing unusual or beautiful birds, though most of the time, the birds proved uncooperative. They don't stick around long enough for one to get a good shot. So I expanded my subject matter to other aspects of nature such as mountains, forests, beaches, flowers, deserts, caves and rivers. I also enjoy taking pictures of

American Indian ruins and other historic sites. Every time I go hiking or go on a trip I take my camera and try to take some shots so I can have a memory frozen in time of the places and sights that I enjoyed. That's why I like still photography—one picture can take me back to a time and place that I relished.

I can feel the fog and the breeze I experienced when I photographed the Northern California Coast. I can smell the sage and other desert flowers in California and Arizona. I can remember how hot and other worldly the Petrified Forest was and how so very cool Carlsbad Caverns was -- and the lightning in Mexico's Copper Canyon was spectacular. In a town called Cerocahui, within one of the Copper Canyons, one can go for a short hike and find a little waterfall surrounded by a beautiful fern canyon. Red Rock Canyon State Park, in Nevada is another spectacular place. The rocks really are red. Unfortunately, my shots of Sedona and Crater Lake in Oregon didn't turn out that great, but that gives me an excuse to go back and try again.

There are so many beautiful places on this planet. I hope these sites will be here forever. It would be a tragedy if these places disappear. I think people are finally realizing we need to be better guardians of this gorgeous place. We need this beautiful planet and the planet needs us.

In 1988 my son and I traveled to Quito, Ecuador to visit my brother and his wife. They were working with Ecuador's Ministry of Health at the time. Ecuador is